



## **Lewistown Infirmary: Questions and Answers**

### **What are the health conditions of the offenders who will be housed in the infirmary?**

All have mobility problems. About half are confined to wheelchairs. Some are reliant on walkers and others are confined to a bed, need help walking or require constant attention to prevent falls. Many also are sight- or hearing-impaired and have multiple, chronic medical issues such as dementia, heart disease, diabetes, pulmonary disease and cancer.

### **How safe is the Lewistown Infirmary going to be?**

We do not believe the offenders placed there will be physically able to pose a threat to the community or its residents. Few, if any, of these low-risk offenders would be capable of escaping or causing harm to others. Their average age is 61. However, safety is our top priority. The Department of Corrections, which will be responsible for safety staff at the infirmary, has the knowledge and experience of operating facilities in a manner that ensures the safety of offenders, staff and the public.

### **Does the care center already operate a locked unit or have other similarities to the infirmary?**

Yes. The populations of the two facilities are of comparable ages. The care center already has one locked housing unit that has been in operation since it opened 60 years ago.

### **Will the infirmary be a greater threat to the safety of Lewistown residents or students than the Nexus treatment center that has operated in Lewistown for five years?**

No. Because of their severe and chronic medical problems, the offenders to be housed in the infirmary will lack the mobility and physical capabilities that those in the Nexus facility have. The only way an offender at the infirmary could become a danger to the community is by leaving the facility without proper security and supervision, and they will be incapable of doing that.

### **What is the difference between offenders at Nexus and those who will be at the Lewistown Infirmary?**

Nexus offenders typically are in their 20s with few physical limitations and severe addictions to multiple drugs that have resisted previous and less-intense treatment efforts. Those at the infirmary will average 61 years old and will have serious medical and physical conditions that limit their mobility and their ability to care for themselves. Based on physical condition, Nexus offenders have a much greater potential to escape from that facility or commit additional crimes than those at the infirmary.

### **What type of training will the Lewistown Infirmary security officers receive?**

They will receive the same type of training a correctional officer receives at the state prison. The training includes four weeks of certified training at the Montana Law Enforcement Academy in Helena. Like other professional occupations, the officers will undergo training on a regular basis.

**What type of security enhancements are going to be installed at the Lewistown Infirmary?**

Safety features will include an eight foot-high fenced yard, special detection devices and security enhancements to windows and doors. Unlike residents of the care center, offenders in the infirmary will not be allowed to walk outside a small fenced yard. No more than two offenders will be allowed in the fenced yard at one time and then only with direct staff supervision.

**How will the security of the infirmary compare to the security at the Nexus facility?**

The security features at the infirmary will be similar to those at Nexus. In addition, more than 160 state employees work within the Montana Mental Health Nursing Care Center. The professional staff will provide additional eyes and ears to enhance a safe and secure infirmary operation.

**Why not add the infirmary at the Nexus treatment center?**

Nexus is a privately owned and operated facility, while the infirmary is a state-operated program. The missions of these two programs and the populations they serve are very different, which results in a need for totally different staff competencies and training. Also, the cost to taxpayers of constructing a new building for the infirmary cannot be justified when an existing building is empty and available. In addition, the populations of the infirmary and care center are of similar ages and the operator of the care center has experience managing a population with serious medical and physical problems.

**What will the infirmary look like?**

Local elected officials and civic leaders will have an opportunity to tour the facility and see its safety features when the improvements are completed later this year.

**What kind of communication about the infirmary will be maintained with local officials?**

State officials will provide periodic updated rosters of the offender population and, if desired by the school district, will develop and maintain regular contact with Justin Jenness, the school district's resource officer.